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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 002268

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [AR](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH BUENOS AIRES VICE
MAYOR-ELECT MICHETTI

Classified By: AMBASSADOR E. ANTHONY WAYNE FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

11. (C) Ambassador Wayne met with Buenos Aires City Vice Mayor-elect Gabriela Michetti to discuss incoming Mayor Mauricio Macri's key policy priorities and challenges. She noted that increasing city revenue is a top priority, as the city's budget deficit makes it difficult to invest in public infrastructure. Michetti said the main challenges for Macri would be restoring public confidence in government institutions, administering Buenos Aires city well, and building the Propuesta Nacional party (PRO) as a new national alternative to Kirchnerismo. She asserted that Argentina needs to redefine its Dirty War-centric discourse on human rights to one of social inclusion. She asserted that Macri wants to have a good working relationship with the Casa Rosada, but that the Kirchner administration is already making that prospect difficult.

PRO: Building Institutions, not Macrismo

12. (C) Ambassador Wayne met November 23 with Vice Mayor-elect Gabriela Michetti to discuss incoming Mayor Mauricio Macri's key priorities and challenges for Buenos Aires city (BA). Michetti stated that Macri's first priority is to increase BA's annual budget in order to make the necessary investment in infrastructure, including schools. She explained that BA has an annual budget of 13 billion pesos (approximately US \$4.15 billion), which mostly goes to salaries and other current expenditures, so Macri was asking the city legislature to authorize an additional 1.6 billion peso (approximately \$500 million) for investment purposes. She asserted that the Propuesta Nacional (PRO) party has a strong commitment to serving the public, and that its key challenge is restoring public confidence in government institutions. The party's second key challenge is to govern Buenos Aires well, while simultaneously building the party as a new national alternative political force. Michetti stated that Macri's goal is to develop institutions -- not a cult of personality -- and is thus delegating authority to a variety of people. As an example, she noted that constitutionally the Vice-Mayor's role was limited to acting only when the Mayor was not in the city, but that Macri was going to delegate some responsibilities to her. She asserted that Argentina needs to break with the model of patronage politics, where the national government buys off NGOs, social protesters ("piqueteros"), and labor unions in order to avoid social conflict. Instead, Argentina needs a government that is accountable to its people and delivers concrete results.

Need to Expand Human Rights Dialogue

13. (C) Turning to a discussion of human rights, Michetti lamented that Argentina's 1976-83 "Dirty War" had monopolized public discourse on human rights. She hopes to delicately broaden Argentine civil society's concept of human rights to include social inclusion. She stated that her generation came of age under democracy, and while remembering Argentina's turbulent past is important, investing in the protection and advancement of human rights in the future is more important. For example, she notes that the city's budget for Memory projects stands at 60 million pesos, while the budget only allocates 6 million pesos for projects to improve accessibility and social inclusion of the handicapped. In addition, the city of Buenos Aires has lost decision-making authority over 17 hectares and 35 buildings currently occupied by the quasi-independent Museum of Memory and other human rights organizations, housed in the former Naval Mechanics School (ESMA). (Note: The ESMA was a notorious detention center where up to 5,000 civilians were tortured and killed during the Dirty War.) She argued that this land would be the perfect place to conduct a number of pilot projects with an expanded human rights agenda, such as a model school of social inclusion, that would not only be handicapped-accessible, but also have a program to give children of low-income families access to high-level sports training. The Ambassador agreed that social inclusion of all people is important and told Michetti that the U.S. Embassy is supporting many international and local NGOs such as the Special Olympics and PH 15 which offers cameras and photography training to children of modest means.

Transparency and Housing are Key Priorities...

14. (C) Another key priority for the Macri administration is improving public access to information and improving transparency in public procurement, Michetti stated, suggesting that U.S. technical assistance in this area would be greatly appreciated. Another priority is dealing with the problem of the "villas de miseria" (slums). She stated that Macri intends to urbanize all of the villas, transforming them into dignified, if modest, neighborhoods with schools and other public services.

...But Recognition of Villa 31 Presents Early Challenge,
Signals Tough Road Ahead with the Casa Rosada

15. (C) The exception, however is Villa 31, which the Macri government has deemed impossible to incorporate into the city. When asked whether the Macri administration intends to implement the recently announced decision of outgoing mayor Jorge Telerman that Buenos Aires city was going to incorporate Villa 31, she said that this would be very difficult to do and that the likely outcome is relocating the inhabitants to another area of town. While insisting that Macri wants to have a positive working relationship with the Casa Rosada, Michetti characterized the decision to incorporate Villa 31 as sabotage by the Kirchner administration to create immediate conflict for Macri before even taking office.

Macri to Develop Relationships with Big City Mayors and
Public-Private Sector Partnerships

16. (C) Michetti noted that Macri is interested in developing relationships with other mayors of large cities around the world, such as New York Mayor Bloomberg. The Ambassador noted that he had talked to Macri by phone about his upcoming travel to New York City to meet with Mayor Bloomberg, and that the Embassy is helping to coordinate future meetings for BA Minister of Justice and Security-designate Guillermo Montenegro with law enforcement agencies in the New York area. Michetti also noted the

importance of cultivating private-public partnerships to promote Buenos Aires as a tourism and investment destination, particularly in time to celebrate Argentina's 2010 bicentennial. The Ambassador closed the meeting by offering Embassy cooperation in setting up digital video conferences on topics of mutual interest.

COMMENT

17. (C) A charming and thoughtful interlocutor, Michetti's vision for responsible government that delivers concrete results to the public is refreshing. Her thoughts on broadening Argentine society's idea of a pro-human rights agenda will be difficult in a country that is still haunted by its Dirty War past, but is what the country needs to move beyond the politics of division towards policies of inclusion. It will be an uphill battle for the Macri team, if Kirchner political machinations to pit the residents of Villa 31 against Macri so early in his tenure as mayor is the first of many to come. End Comment.

BIO

18. (C) Gabriella Michetti will take office as Vice Mayor of Buenos Aires on December 10. Previously, she served as President of the PRO bloc in the Buenos Aires City legislature where she championed legislation on issues such as public access to information, special education programs for the disabled, assistance programs for troubled children, adolescents, and domestic violence victims, and the prohibition of sexual exploitation of children. A devout Catholic, Michetti has been very critical of bills promoting sexual education and the legalization of abortion. Michetti took a leading role in the PRO-offensive against former Mayor Anibal Ibarra after the December 2004 Cromagnon nightclub tragedy. Michetti is the niece of former Radical President Arturo Illia, but she does not have a long partisan history. Michetti has also served as a private consultant to both the UN Development Program, the Inter-American Development Bank, and as Director of International Commercial Negotiations at the Ministry of Economy. She has a Masters in Regional Integration and has studied university management in Canada

and international commercial conflict resolution in Geneva. She has worked as a trade lawyer defending Argentine clients before the WTO and in bilateral trade disputes with the U.S. and was a professor for 15 years at several universities in Argentina. She has actively worked with literacy and Catholic social ministry groups. Michetti is 41 and has one son. She was paralyzed in an auto accident and uses a wheelchair.

WAYNE